Crown of Heat: A Memoir of 2025

by Jonathan Olvera

It was a very hot and dry morning in the Southwest Territory. By midday, around three o'clock, the sun cast long shadows across the landscape. The mountains stood tall, and beneath them teemed the jolts of life—birds, insects, hidden springs, and the unseen warmth that nourished both soil and spirit. Despite the dryness, there was fruit to be collected. There was direction in the governance of this place, a land where the sun always shines. It was as though a crown—brilliant, golden, and eternal—rested above this desert, making it both unforgiving and sacred.

I rose that morning, wiped the sweat from my brow, and said aloud, "Oh my, it's terribly, terribly hot. It feels as if the sun itself is on fire, and yet the rain falls upon my head, my face, and my shoulder."

Some men nearby chuckled. "Jonathan," one said, "you always speak like the sun is listening to you."

"Perhaps it is," I answered with a grin. "Perhaps it is."

The heat pressed down as I stood upon a platform, one that had been decorated for a wedding just the night before. Now, in the daylight, the same platform was marked with devices to note locations, to record plans, and to honor the traditions of the Indian community who had long called this land home. The new visitors—merchants, workers, dreamers—came to learn from them, to build with them, to add their voices to this land's song.

"Oh," I sighed, "there is much work to do."

The afternoon greeted me in turn, its company stern yet generous, as though saying, *If you will endure my heat, I will grant you strength.* Treaties were spoken of in the shade, agreements made between peoples and workers. It was another day to labor, another day to search the offices for assignments: work in the quarry, work with tobacco, with maize, with beans. Always work. Always movement.

I thought to myself, *Goodness, what will become of this place?* I could see it even then: a future where the quarries would hum with progress, the fields heavy with harvests, the villages and towns alive with laughter. *Yes,* I mused, *this place will one day be known as a fruitful garden.*

And though it was hot—so hot that the air shimmered above the ground—it was still beautiful. The desert was always alive, if one knew where to look. The sun would climb high into the sky, burning fiercely, almost as if speaking to us. And when it descended, the moon followed faithfully, quiet and watchful. At night the stars pierced the black canvas of heaven with a brilliance so pure, it seemed as though the very hand of God had brushed them there for our comfort.

“How amazing,” I often whispered to myself. And others, seeing me stand still under the vast night, would stop and look too. In those moments, silence was our prayer.

Back in my quarters, I prepared for another day’s work. I washed my gloves, cleaned the dust from my boots, and ran water through my hair. Water—clear, cool, blessed water—was a gift in this desert. To hold it in your hands was to feel history itself: thousands of years of struggle, migration, cultivation, and survival.

As I cupped the water, I thought, *How many before me have done this same thing? How many hands, brown and weathered, have lifted water to their lips and given thanks?*

Gratitude became my ritual. Each day, I promised myself that no matter how hot, no matter how long, I would take one step forward. I would wash my hands, wash my face, and remember to give thanks. I would keep my boots steady, my rag ready, and my heart set upon the work before me.

“The Lord, our great leader,” I would say to myself, “has not left us. This land is His reminder. This labor is His lesson. This progress, slow and steady, is His glory.”

Others sometimes laughed at my seriousness. One man, while sharpening his tools, teased, “Jonathan, you speak like a preacher. Always with your promises and prayers.”

“Maybe so,” I answered with a smile. “But a man needs both sweat and faith if he’s to survive here.”

The man nodded after a pause. “Maybe you’re right.”

And so the days turned, one after another, like stones laid carefully in a long path. Work in the quarries, labor in the fields, tending to maize and beans. The hum of tools, the rhythm of shovels, the laughter of children running between the rows of crops. The desert tested us daily, yet it also shaped us into a people of resilience, a people who could endure, and a people who could dream.

When the evening came, I often sat upon the ridge overlooking the settlement. The air cooled slightly, and a breeze carried with it the faint smell of mesquite. I would reflect: *This year, this 2025, what will I remember?*

I will remember the heat that burned but never destroyed.
I will remember the people, their voices rising like a chorus against the harsh wind.
I will remember the water, every drop a sacred gift.
I will remember the vision of fields and quarries, of progress and harvests, of treaties and unity.
I will remember gratitude.

And perhaps, most of all, I will remember the crown—the crown of heat, of light, of the desert sun. It weighed upon us, yes, but it also shone above us, reminding us that even in the harshest of lands, life persists, and God remains.

Each day, I chose to take one step forward. And each step, no matter how small, became part of a larger journey. That is how I will remember the year 2025: not as a time of ease, but as a time of endurance, of labor, of thanksgiving. A time when the desert tested me, and I, in return, learned to speak back to the sun.

“Terribly hot,” I said again one evening, wiping the sweat from my brow. “But thank God—it is also terribly beautiful.”

And with that, I tightened my boots, washed my hands, and prepared for another day.